

CONSTRUCTION OF ADDITIONAL FACILITIES AT WALTER REED GENERAL HOSPITAL

FEBRUARY 6, 1925.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. JAMES, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT

[To accompany S. 3818]

This is a similar bill to H. R. 11252, which was favorably reported to the House on January 12, 1925. Consequently, the report made at that time is made a part of this report, as follows:

[House Report No. 1164, Sixty-eighth Congress, second session]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (S. 3818) authorizing the construction of additional facilities at Walter Reed General Hospital, having considered the same, report thereon with a recommendation that it do pass.

This measure will authorize an appropriation of \$2,000,000 for construction at Walter Reed Hospital. This hospital is recognized by the War Department as the medical center of the Army. At this hospital are located medical officers of high reputation, and especial attention is given to surgical and reconstruction cases.

At the present time many patients are housed in temporary buildings erected during the war. This bill will authorize an appropriation to be used in constructing buildings of a permanent nature to care for some 700 patients.

The reasons and, in fact, necessity for this appropriation are quite fully set forth in letters received from the Secretary of War and the Surgeon General of the Army. These letters are made a part of this report, as follows:

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, December 22, 1924.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

SIR: The Congress has from time to time appropriated funds for the development of the Army medical center, District of Columbia. The Walter Reed General Hospital at the Army medical center cares for about 1,000 patients at the present time, of whom two-fifths are war veterans. The capacity of this hospital as a permanent and fireproof structure should be 1,000 beds. The temporary wards now in use are rapidly deteriorating, and the repairs required to maintain them are excessive as compared with the value of the buildings. Besides, they are fire traps, which at any time may become the source of a tragic conflagration.

In order that construction of the most essential buildings necessary in the development of the Army center program may be furthered as expeditiously as possible, an appropriation of \$2,000,000 will be required for this purpose. The construction contemplated for this amount consists of the following additions to be erected in the order of priority:

(a) Two wings containing wards as additions to the main hospital building-----	\$1, 421, 000
(b) Rear addition to main building, to contain dining rooms, kitchens, wards, and a library-----	300, 000
(c) Laboratory and morgue building-----	125, 000
(d) 1. Tuberculosis ward-----	\$250, 000
2. Observation ward-----	250, 000
3. Infectious diseases ward-----	250, 000
4. Semi-isolation ward-----	250, 000
	1, 000, 000
Total-----	2, 846, 000

The War Department housing program contains items totaling \$3,820,000 for construction at Walter Reed General Hospital, of which amount the sum of \$2,846,000 is for items contained in this project. The housing program provides that construction thereunder shall be from funds derived from the sale of property after Congress has made an appropriation therefor. To defer action toward the development of the Army medical center until such time as funds may be available from the housing program very probably would be an injury to this necessary project. The Veterans' Bureau is to contribute \$900,000 of the above total of \$2,846,000. The \$900,000 is included in the second deficiency bill and the War Department is prepared to commence the construction program as soon as these funds become available.

The following draft of legislation is presented for the consideration of the Congress, in order that the authority of that body may be obtained for an appropriation to continue the construction of additional facilities required at the Army medical center:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That in order to continue the construction of additional facilities at Walter Reed General Hospital, in the District of Columbia, there is hereby authorized to be appropriated a sum of not exceeding \$2,000,000, to be expended by the Secretary of War, for the construction of the following improvements and buildings, including roads leading thereto, necessary furniture, equipment, and accessories: (a) Completing two wings to the main hospital building, containing wards; (b) a rear addition to the main hospital building, containing dining rooms, kitchens, wards, and a library; (c) a laboratory and morgue building, and tuberculosis, observation, infectious disease, and semi-isolation wards."

The Director of the Bureau of the Budget has been consulted and advises that the proposed legislation is not in conflict with the financial program of the President.

A similar letter has been addressed to the chairman Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN W. WEEKS, *Secretary of War.*

JANUARY 10, 1925.

Hon. FRANK W. JAMES,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. JAMES: With reference to my letter of December 22, 1924, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, recommending an appropriation of \$2,000,000 for the further development of Walter Reed General Hospital, I desire to invite your attention to certain reasons for the early appropriation of funds for this purpose.

At the present time there are more than 1,000 patients in the Walter Reed General Hospital, and of this number only 120 are in permanent buildings. There are thus more than 850 patients, a number of whom are disabled veterans of the World War, who are in temporary buildings. These temporary buildings are relics of war-time construction and are totally unsuitable for continued use in caring for this large number of patients.

These buildings not only cost more than they are worth to keep at all habitable by repairs but they are the worst kind of fire traps. Housing of patients in such buildings and under such serious menace of fire is a source of the greatest concern to the War Department. So serious is the menace from fire that it should hardly be necessary to point out the further facts that these buildings are insanitary and therefore totally unsuited for proper medical and surgical treatment of patients. During the calendar year of 1924 there were no less than 16 fire alarms among these temporary buildings. It is therefore evident that a tragic fire has been escaped purely through chance.

As stated in my letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the Veterans' Bureau stands ready to contribute \$900,000 toward the proposed construction program at the Walter Reed Hospital. It is estimated that this \$900,000 added to the \$2,000,000 carried in the pending bill will be sufficient to complete wards capable of caring for at least 750 patients. This would reduce the number of patients in temporary buildings to about 100.

The enacting of the proposed legislation is, in my judgment, essential from the standpoint of proper care of the many patients now improperly housed, and will also result in stopping the waste of money in trying to maintain the present unsuitable, insanitary temporary buildings, which also constitute the fire menace above mentioned.

As stated in my letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, I have been advised that the proposed legislation is not in conflict with the financial program of the President.

Sincerely yours,

JOHN W. WEEKS, *Secretary of War.*

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SURGEON GENERAL,
Washington, January 9, 1925.

HON. W. FRANK JAMES, M. C.,
House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR MR. JAMES: Referring to H. R. 11252, introduced in the House of Representatives January 2, 1925, by Mr. McKenzie, I wish very much to emphasize the urgent necessity for the appropriation at this time of the total amount of \$2,000,000 specified in the bill, rather than to allow the same amount piecemeal and from year to year.

As is shown very clearly in the letter of the Secretary of War advocating this subject to the chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, United States Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives, a total amount of \$2,846,000 is necessary to expand Walter Reed Hospital as a permanent and fireproof institution for the treatment of the sick of the Army and disabled veterans, with a capacity of 750 or 800 beds. Nine hundred thousand dollars of this has been allowed by the Veterans' Bureau and is included in the second deficiency bill. The amount asked in H. R. 11252 is needed almost entirely for ward accommodations for the sick. These wards will be contained in additions to the main hospital building and in separate ward buildings for tuberculosis, for observation, for infectious diseases, and for semi-isolation.

It is very desirable that work should begin without delay and that the entire project of construction be carried on as one undertaking. At the present time Walter Reed Hospital cares for an average of 1,000 patients. From two-fifths to one-half of these patients are disabled war veterans sent to Walter Reed Hospital by the Veterans' Bureau. There are 32 wards contained in temporary and highly inflammable structures that were erected during the war and have paid for themselves many times over in accommodating the sick and wounded. They have long survived their usefulness, they consume a considerable amount of money for repair from year to year, and are steadily deteriorating. Above all, they cause a constant anxiety in the minds of all of those intrusted with the care of the helpless patients over the ever-present danger of a conflagration. Constant vigilance only has hitherto prevented a serious fire, the occasion for which occurs very frequently. In these 32 temporary wards are housed between eight and nine hundred of the patients of the hospital.

You will notice that a comparatively small part of the total amount asked for is to be expended upon the necessary service department in the main building and for the laboratory and morgue. In fact, practically all of the money is to be spent for the actual shelter of the patients. If by this appropriation work on the

different parts of this construction can be begun at the same time, much time and probably in the end much money will be saved.

I sincerely trust this bill will be given early favorable consideration, as it is a matter of vital interest to the proper housing and treatment of the sick and disabled soldier. It should therefore be of great concern to the public at large, as well as to the Medical Department of the Army, which is charged with the care of these wards of the Nation.

Very sincerely yours,

M. W. IRELAND,
Major General, the Surgeon General.

